

# PLANNING AHEAD

## Notes for the Planning Community

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### Notes from Jim Johnson

I am just beginning to adjust to my new surroundings and what promises to be a very active schedule. Despite having been here just a few weeks, I am enjoying both the challenges and opportunities. I am especially impressed with the high level of capability and with enthusiasm of the Headquarters planning team.

I am also very impressed with the level of teamwork and spirit of partnership among my fellow civil works division chiefs. As we move forward, my strongest and most enduring request is for all of us -- districts, divisions and Headquarters -- to work

together in building a strong, successful civil works program and equally important, for all of us to share in that success.

We have a lot of work to do. As many of you realize, the civil works program is distributed unevenly throughout the country. Some divisions and districts have very strong, diverse programs but several do not. The civil works program requires a strong planning program in order to continue to address new problems within its mission responsibilities and to maintain a steady source of new projects. Over a period of several years, planning programs and organizations have evolved differently nationwide. All of us in the directorate are working to strengthen the civil works program and I intend to focus on the role that the planning programs can play in that effort. Together, we will begin taking the steps we need to accomplish the revitalization of the planning program and its role in the Corps overall water resources development mission.

In general, strong civil works programs should include both traditional programs such as flood protection and navigation as well as emerging ecosystem restoration. They should be balanced and diversified nationwide, as well as over time. I will be looking to our division and district offices for sound strategic planning in developing and nourishing such programs within your regions and in contributing to a strong nationwide civil works program. We will try to assist you by improving your

ability to carry out planning programs more efficiently and cost-effectively, as well as by transferring ideas on program building strategies and improvements that are working elsewhere to help each of you to share in that success.

Over the coming months, I will be meeting with other civil works divisions, division senior leaders, division and district planners, Administration and congressional staffs, other Federal agencies, and key interest groups to forge relationships crucial to our success. As we enter the next century, I believe the Army Corps of Engineers is uniquely positioned to address the Nation's water resource and environmental problems through our ability to plan and implement effective solutions based on high quality engineering, environmental and economic capabilities. I intend to actively spread that message.

One of my initial tasks is to lay out mission objectives that support a strong, responsive and highly respected civil works program nationwide. The following objectives will receive priority planning division attention:

Improve Planning Outputs. I would like to improve program measurement criteria so that they more accurately reflect success and that they serve as more effective guides for carrying out a successful civil works program.

Improve Planning Initiatives. I intend to explore all existing authorities, national programs and initiatives, and to encourage creative approaches to problem solving in building a strong and responsive civil works program.

Improve the Planning Process. Although the current process is fundamentally sound, we need to identify ways to improve and simplify it, while still achieving sound, responsive and integrated plans, projects and solutions.

Improve the Report Production Process. Although the current report production process also is fundamentally sound, we need to see where we can streamline and simplify the process while still

producing high quality decision documents with high quality technical solutions.

Improve Planning Capability. Despite the importance of planning capability to successful civil works programs, we are losing that capability throughout the Corps of Engineers. We need to rebuild that capability throughout the Corps in order to have a strong and successful future. As we rebuild our civil works programs and refine our planning processes, we also must develop the training programs that will guide planners through these new processes.

I will address these and other issues in future months and I will keep you advised on our progress on all of these efforts. I will also be looking to each of you for ideas, and for ways to improve our two-way communication. ❖

## A Word from the Editor

*Harry Kitch – CECW-PC*

As we begin "taking the steps we need to accomplish the revitalization of the planning program and its role in the Corps overall water resources development mission", I would like to restate our objective in publishing "Planning Ahead".

We hope that this effort will serve to improve the communication among all the planners and those we work with throughout the Corps. While most of the information we have presented has been from the Washington level, we hope and expect that future editions will have mostly information and perspective from those of you on the front lines in the districts. We hope that these notes become a forum for you to share your experiences to help all of us learn from each other. We can't afford to reinvent the wheel in each office. Please send me your thoughts, questions, success stories, and bitter lessons so that we can share them on these pages. ❖

## Four Degrees of Separation

Kirby Fowler - CECW-PD

Everyone on the planet is linked to everyone else by a chain of acquaintances just six people deep, right? A Washington Post reviewer said that this notion -- the plot 'hook' for the movie "Six Degrees of Separation" -- could be "plausible only to a socialite living on the Upper East Side" of New York. It was therefore good for plausibility's sake that the movie took place on the Upper East Side; if HQ Planning now says that everyone on the planet is separated from Corps planning guidance by only four degrees of separation, is that plausible? [And yes, we hear the murmurs -- "Not enough, not enough"].

Well, four degrees of separation is not only plausible, it's a demonstrable fact. Anyone on the planet doing an AltaVista search on the string "planning guidance notebook" or "ER 1105-2-100" can, with just four clicks, arrive at HQ planning's General Planning Guidance webpage. Try it. Several first page 'hits' on either search string will get you, with just three more clicks, to planning's guidance cornucopia, which includes the latest version of chapters 4, 5 and 6 of ER 1105-2-100, a.k.a. the Planning Guidance Notebook, and a whole bunch of other stuff (Planning Guidance Letters, Economic Guidance Memoranda, the 'original' version of the *Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies*, and more).

Or, you can go directly to the webpage by copying and pasting the following 'address' (uniform resource locator, or URL) into the location bar of your web browser:

<http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/ce/cwp/guidance.htm>

Planners and project managers should bookmark this site. Changes in guidance will go up here first (after appropriate coordination of course).

Somewhat surprised at the reported difficulty in finding Corps guidance, the author conducted a (near) ten percent random sample of Corps district and division web sites. On examination no site had any link to Corps planning guidance; one had a link to the 'Corps planning process'. Corps district and division planning folks can help each other out -- not to mention helping out those that need it most, Project Management -- by providing links on their web pages to Corps planning guidance. ❖

## 57th EAB Meeting

Beverley B. Getzen - CECW-PD

The Environmental Advisory Board Meeting last week in Alexandria, VA, was a great success, attended by over 100 participants representing many COE offices and labs as well as several other agencies and organizations. Dr. Jim Johnson, Chief of Planning at HQUSACE, delivered the Charge to the EAB on behalf of the Chief of Engineers. The theme of the meeting was "The Watershed Perspective" and focused on partnerships (internal and external) in facilitating watershed management and solutions to watershed problems. Speakers, invited guests and panelists from the White House, Dept. of the Interior, Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Army, EPA, USFS and NRCS provided the audience with updated information on programs which emphasize watershed units as the focus of restoration strategies and plans for funding watershed activities at the state and Tribal levels for this FY. They discussed new and emerging policies for management of watershed-related resources, and the latest developments on the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP), American Heritage Rivers, Challenge 21 and other national and interagency initiatives. All 50 states and 14 Tribes had submitted their Unified Watershed Assessments, identifying the highest priority watersheds for restoration, thus offering the opportunity and challenge to COE districts to seek partnerships to provide assistance wherever possible. The latest

draft of the Unified Federal Policy, a joint interagency development, was presented to the group, inviting comments and responses from the Federal family before it is released for public review. (Copies of that internal draft policy have been furnished to each CWAP-POC for coordination within MSC's and districts.) The Corps' new draft Policy Guidance Letter #61 on Watershed Perspective formed the focus of follow-on discussions and EAB consideration as the presentations proceeded.

There were several presentations from Corps field staff, including discussions of problems confronting Operating Project Managers at Lake Sidney Lanier (presented by Erwin Topper) and Keystone Lake (presented by Earl Groves), and innovations in project and natural resources management. Regulatory staff described various initiatives in working with intra-agency partners, especially planning staff, to achieve programmatic EIS's, Special Area Management Plans and other useful tools for combining scientific and decision processes to the advantage of all functional areas in the COE and for the advantage of customers and stakeholders.

Mr. Charlie Hess, Chief of Operations, Construction and Readiness at HQUSACE, participated in the discussions and also received the preliminary report of the EAB on Friday. He gave a summary of activities in which he and his staff are involved, including teaching tools for instructional use on such subjects as wetlands, watersheds, biodiversity, flooding, and navigation. He reiterated the commitment of all functional areas in the Corps to continue to work together on matters of mutual interest such as watersheds, especially since his field staff are the "front line" in interacting with affected publics on watershed quality matters.

Plans are now beginning for the next EAB Meeting which will be hosted in the spring of '99 by SWD. The subject of that culminating meeting on watersheds will be tools, technology and techniques for watershed evaluation, assessment and management. Participants from the various

laboratories affirmed their commitment to assist in that program development. Summaries of this EAB meeting will soon be available. Don't forget that comments are invited on the Unified Federal Policy and on PGL 61. Contact Beverley Getzen for more information or to furnish comments on either document. Meanwhile, start making plans to participate in the next EAB! ❖

## New Command Inspections Start

*Barry Kennedy - CECW-PC*

A new process for Command Inspections has been instituted to:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of MSC's implementation of their Quality Assurance role in overseeing the districts' delivery of quality products to their customers;
2. To review the status of business processes for promulgation throughout USACE; and,
3. To review the interpretation and application of USACE policy and guidance.

Two divisions will be scheduled each year resulting in a four-year inspection cycle. The Pacific Ocean Division and the Honolulu and Alaska districts will be inspected in early 1999.

The first inspection trip reviewed the Mississippi Valley Division's (MVD) application of quality management principles and procedures as prescribed by HQUSACE policies and regulations and expressed in the MSC and District Quality Management, Quality Control and Quality Assurance plans. The team from HQUSACE inspected MVD and St. Paul District (MVP), St. Louis District (MVS), and Rock Island District (MVR) to evaluate effectiveness of the MVD quality assurance plan. Barry Kennedy represented the planning function on the inspection team. ❖

## Continuing Authorities Program Process Action Team

*Denver Austin - SAD*

The Continuing Authorities Program Process Action Team held its inaugural meeting in Chicago 20-23 October. The team reviewed and addressed each of the 90+ written comments submitted in response to the request for suggestions as well as those gathered in interviews at HQUSACE.

With these suggestions in mind, and the prime objectives in the charge to the team (performance improvement and increased responsiveness), the team began work on general operating principles of the CAP, tasks to be performed, issues to be addressed, and a preliminary array of management and procedural measures that could improve performance and responsiveness with the potential of time and cost savings.

The team will meet again 4-6 November in Dallas, TX, and 18-20 November in Nashville, TN. The final report to the HQ Civil Works leadership is expected about end of November.

The team members are Denver Austin, Chair, SAD; Phil Berkeley, LRB; Lexine Cool, MVD; Christopher Glanz, LRD-GL; Alicia Kirchner, SPK; and Tyrae Mahan, NWP. ❖

## SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE

The deadline for material for the next issue is 23 November 1998. ❖

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